BACKGROUNDER NO. 1-9967 JANUARY 15, 1976
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THE A-B-C'S OF ANGOLA

ANNCR:

WITH THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY ANNOUNCEMENT THIS WEEK THAT IT WAS UNABLE AT THIS TIME TO REACH AGREEMENT ON RESOLVING THE ANGOLAN CRISIS, THE SPOTLIGHT IS ONCE AGAIN ON THE SITUATION WITHIN THE WEST AFRICAN STATE. VOA'S AFRICA EDITOR DAVID WILLIAMS HAS THIS REVIEW ON THE INTERNAL SITUATION.

VOICE:

NEWS REPORTS OF THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS INDICATED THAT THE SOVIET AND CUBAN BACKED POPULAR MOVEMENT HAS BEEN MAKING MAJOR GAINS... ESPECIALLY IN THE NORTH AGAINST THE NATIONAL FRONT. THE REPORTS HAVE THE POPULAR FRONT FORCE NEARING THE BORDER WITH ZAIRE. AT A NEWS CONFERENCE THIS WEEK, AMERICAN SECRETARY OF STATE KISSINGER SAID THE SOVIET UNION HAD POURED MORE THAN TWO HUNDRED MILLION DOLLARS WORTH OF MILITARY EQUIPMENT INTO ANGOLA IN A NINE MONTH PERIOD AND THAT THE POPULAR FRONT'S NOTHERN FORCE CONSISTS ALMOST ENTIRELY OF CUBAN TROOPS -- NOT AFRICANS.

ANGOLA WATCHERS HAVE SAID THAT THE FIGHTING IN ANGOLA WOULD HAVE BEEN ON A RELATIVELY SMALL TRIBAL SCALE HAD IT NOT BEEN FOR FOREIGN INTERVENTION. THESE OBSERVERS SAY THAT THE AREAS OF ANGOLA HELD BY THE THREE FACTIONS OVER THE PAST FEW MONTHS SHOW THE ETHNIC DIVISIONS OF THE COUNTRY. WHILE THERE ARE NUMEROUS SMALL TRIBES IN ANGOLA, THE THREE MAJOR GROUPS ARE THE BAKONGO IN THE NORTH, THE KIMBUNDU IN THE MIDDLE AREAS INCLUDING THE CAPITAL, AND OVIMBUNDU IN THE CENTRAL PLATEAU AND SOUTHERN REGIONS. UP UNTIL THE PAST FEW DAYS AND THE POPULAR MOVEMENT OFFENSIVE, THE NATIONAL FRONT -- A BAKONGO DOMINATED ORGANIZATION -- HELD THE NORTHERN REGION. THE NATIONAL FRONT IS LED BY HOLDEN ROBERTO -- HIMSELF A

BAKONGO. IT IS THE OLDEST OF THE THREE WARRING FACTIONS AND HAS TRIED ON SEVERAL OCCASIONS TO SHAKE THE TRIBAL LABEL. DANIEL CHIPENDA, AN OVIMBUNDU WHO BROKE AWAY FROM THE POPULAR MOVEMENT, HAS JOINED THE NATIONAL FRONT. JONAS SAVIMBI, AN OVIMBUNDU WHO HEADS UNITA, WAS ONCE THE NATIONAL FRONT'S FOREIGN MINISTER. HE QUIT THE GROUP CHARGING IT WAS TOO TRIBALLY ORIENTED. THE NATIONAL FRONT GETS MOST OF ITS SUPPORT FROM NEIGHBORING ZAIRE WHERE MOST OF THE BAKONGO LIVE.

THE POPULAR MOVEMENT DOMINATES KIMBUNDU AREA. ANGOLAN SCHOLARS ONCE WROTE THAT THE NAME KIMBUNDU HAS BEEN USED INDISCRIMINATELY TO MEAN MEMBERS OF A LINGUISTIC GROUP, RESIDENTS OF LUANDA, OR, FOR THAT MATTER, ANY AFRICAN. THE POPULAR MOVEMENT ALSO DRAWS SUPPORT FROM PEOPLE OF MIXED-BLOOD, LABOR GROUPS, AND INTELLECTUALS. IT IS OFTEN REFERRED TO IN NEWS DISPATCHES AS "MARXIST." BUT OTHER OBSERVERS CAUTION THAT LABELS SUCH AS "MARXIST,", MAOIST," OR "PRO-WESTERN" CAN BE MISLEADING. THE POPULAR MOVEMENT HAS BEEN STRONGLY BOLSTERED BY CUBAN TROOPS AND SOVIET MILITARY AID.

THE SOUTHERN AREA OF ANGOLA IS CONTROLLED BY UNITA WHICH HAS REPORTEDLY RECEIVED SOUTH AFRICAN MILITARY SUPPORT. IT IS ALSO BACKED BY THE OVIMBUNDU WHICH INCLUDES MORE THAN ONE THIRD OF ANGOLA'S POOULATION. UNITA LEADER JONAS SAVIMBI IS AN OVIMBUNDU.

LEFT TO ITSELF, ANGOLA MIGHT STILL BE ABLE TO RESOLVE ITS OWN PROBLEMS PERHAPS WITH THE HELP OF THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY. BUT MASSIVE OUTSIDE INTERVENTION INCLUDING THE PRESENCE OF CUBANS AND SOUTH AFRICANS HAS SPLIT EVEN THE ORGANIZATION OF AFRICAN UNITY DOWN THE MIDDLE.

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